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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

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(a) RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/48/3 (chap. VII.C), A/48/38, A/48/98, A/48/124-S/25506, A/48/182, A/48/187-E/1993/76, A/48/279, A/48/301, A/48/338, A/48/354, A/48/359, A/48/413, A/48/513, A/48/546, A/48/591; A/C.3/48/6, A/C.3/48/10, A/C.3/48/L.5)

1. Mrs. NHLABATSI (Swaziland) said she was gratified to note that the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women had been gaining momentum since the latest session of the Commission on the Status of Women. She thanked the directors of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for their introductory remarks regarding the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and said she was pleased to note that, despite the obstacles encountered by countries, the Strategies had raised the awareness of women with regard to their fundamental rights.

2. She stressed that without peace, women could not exercise their rights. In that connection, she invoked the provisions of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulated that one of the purposes of the Organization was "to maintain international peace and security", as well as the essential principles of the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation. Her delegation believed that the pursuit of peace must be considered a priority, for without it there could be neither development nor equality between men and women.

3. With regard to development, the stereotyped roles that continued to be ascribed to women kept them in a dependent role at all levels of the development process. In her delegation's view, development implied the full participation of women in all phases of that process.

4. In Swaziland, women had taken their destiny in hand by creating non-governmental organizations, which had greatly increased in number since the 1985 Nairobi Conference. The concept of integrating the problems of women into all development sectors had turned out to be counterproductive in Swaziland, where, since no national machinery had been created, each sector had had to incorporate women's issues into its programme. As a result, the various sectors had merely referred implicitly to those issues but failed to reflect them in their policies. Women's issues were also not reflected in the national development plan. The international community should therefore reassess that concept.

5. Their consciousness aroused by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, some Swazi women had attained economic independence through education and training. Particular progress had been made at the grass-roots level, where large numbers of women had participated in adult education programmes. Indeed, the Sebenta National Institute, a non-governmental organization for adult education, had won the 1993 International Reading Association Award for its work in that area. Women were also taking part in on-the-job training programmes, seminars,

(Mrs. Nhlabatsi, Swaziland)

workshops, and short courses, and some had won grants to continue their studies abroad. Education and training for women involved both the public and private sectors. Swazi women were grateful to those countries that had awarded them study grants; however, more women needed education and training. In the area of employment, women were still exposed to such problems as harassment and low pay. In the informal sector, they suffered from a lack of access to land and credit.

6. The United Nations system had expended great efforts fighting sexual discrimination. Although some countries had enacted legislation to that end, it was rarely enforced. Discrimination and inequality between men and women derived from a variety of factors and was reflected in the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies. As noted in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, if women were to enjoy true equality with men, they must share power on equal terms with men.

7. With regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (resolution 34/180), her delegation felt that violence against women was fostered by certain cultures and religions which regarded women as the property of men. It was no wonder that physical violence against women and children was on the increase since it was condoned by society. Women were also the victims of psychological violence: they were taught that they were inferior, weaker beings, to be subject to men all their lives. Those two varieties of violence must be stopped. In Swaziland, a non-governmental organization known as the Swaziland Association Against the Abuse of Women, which worked in collaboration with the Legal Unit of the Council of Churches, offered free counselling and legal representation to female victims of rape and physical abuse. The Legal Unit also informed women about laws that discriminated against them and possible remedies. The Association planned to build a centre for abused women and children and appealed to the international community to provide financial and technical assistance for that project.

8. In considering the crucial problem of food self-sufficiency in developing countries, particularly in Africa, the fact that in rural areas agricultural workers were women did not appear to be taken into account. They did not own the means of production, apart from their labour itself, which was poorly remunerated; their tools were primitive and did not enable them to increase their production; and they did not participate in decisions as to what to grow. Such factors were the cause of poverty and famine, which had brought death to many innocent people. Measures adopted to alleviate poverty addressed the symptoms but ignored the root cause of the problem. The question of poverty in rural areas should be addressed in the context of sustainable development.

9. One of the greatest concerns in Swaziland was HIV/AIDS. A national strategy and a medium-term plan had accordingly been adopted with the following objectives: to prevent the spread of HIV; to reduce the personal and social impact of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases; and to reduce the economic impact of the epidemic throughout Swazi society.

10. Her delegation hoped that the goal of the INSTRAW/UNIFEM merger was to strengthen the working relationship between those two institutions so that they

(Mrs. Nhlabatsi, Swaziland)

could better respond to the needs of women, and not to cut their staffs and budgets. It also supported greater representation by women in the United Nations Secretariat, on the basis of equitable regional distribution.

11. With regard to preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, her delegation welcomed the initiative taken by its Secretary-General in establishing a special Trust Fund to finance preparatory activities at the national level, as well as the participation of representatives from developing countries and non-governmental organizations in those activities. Resources and technical assistance would be needed to set up national coordinating committees and to identify problems that might arise in countries that lacked operational national machinery. The national committees should endeavour to ensure that their delegations refrained from presenting divisive resolutions to the Conference and instead worked toward consensus. At the Beijing Conference, the women participants should remain alert and participate in the discussions until the end of the session so as to ensure that its goals were attained.

12. With regard to the preparations for the Conference, the Secretariat should continue its work on violence not only against women migrant workers but also against women refugees and displaced persons. In that connection, her delegation hoped that the General Assembly would adopt the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5), as well as the report of the World Conference on Human Rights. It agreed with other delegations that the reports of that conference, as well as those of the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in 1994, and the World Summit for Social Development to be held in 1995 should be taken into consideration in the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

13. Mrs. AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) said that there could be no real development without the advancement of women. It was therefore important to accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. There was also a need to coordinate national and international activities in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

14. Stressing the importance that should be given to the rights of rural women, which were generally ignored, she noted the traditional role played by rural women in Yemen, especially in agriculture, because of the mass emigration of the men. Although Yemen was making efforts to include women in the development process, that process could not be successfully completed without increased support from the international community. It was, in particular, essential to eliminate illiteracy and combat poverty, two obstacles that prevented Yemeni women from fully exercising their constitutional and other rights. That having been said, it should also be noted that, since Yemen had opted for democracy and a multi-party system, several Yemeni women had been elected to Parliament in the legislative elections of 27 April 1993.

15. She strongly denounced the systematic rape of Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and stressed the importance of adopting the declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

16. Mrs. REGAZZOLI (Argentina), Under-Secretary for Human Rights and Women's Issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, noted that the World Conference on Human Rights, held in June 1993, had adopted important recommendations on the rights and equality of women, the implementation of which could no longer be postponed. She trusted that, with the prospect of the Fourth World Conference on Women, every country would become aware of the important role played by women in the history of humankind, and she was convinced that the Conference would be a milestone in the long struggle of women to be included in all areas of endeavour.

17. From 26 to 30 September 1994, Argentina would be hosting the Sixth Regional Conference convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in preparation for the Beijing Conference. For its part, the Argentine Government had in July 1993 established a national coordination centre to coordinate preparations for the Conference.

18. The United Nations had carried out an impressive amount of legal work to safeguard the rights of women, in particular through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, opportunities for progress in that area were far from exhausted and for that reason the Beijing Conference was of vital importance. In that connection, the women who were responsible for the regional preparatory conferences should mobilize all women at all levels, so that the Beijing summit would accurately reflect the situation of women in the various regions of the world and a programme could be developed which would be decisive for their future and the future of humanity.

19. After years of conflict and reflection, women today wished to see a new social pact adopted based on equality, in accordance with the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Women should therefore take stock of successes and failures and plan ahead, bearing in mind that they continued to be subjected to employment, social and political discrimination and that in the developing countries they were the group most affected by poverty and violence in all their forms.

20. The media had become a system that was a power unto itself which affected the entire planet and influenced relationships in the family and in society. Sensationalism, incitation to consumerism, and the destruction of family models and moral values supplanted the news, and "good" news was not broadcast since it did not "sell". That concern had been brought to the attention of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights of Costa Rica, which had conducted a study of the behaviour of the media in different countries on that continent. It might be necessary to propose a code of ethics to which the media should conform.

21. The struggle against poverty should first take account of the needs of women living in extreme poverty. That question had been selected by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women for inclusion in the publication The World's Women. It should also be noted that poverty gave rise to violence, which destroyed the social fabric of countries. In that connection, her delegation emphatically supported the declaration on the elimination of violence

(Mrs. Regazzoli, Argentina)

against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) and hoped that the Third Committee would adopt it by consensus.

22. The Inter-American Commission of Women, of which she was Chairperson, endeavoured, inter alia, to provide women with better protection and remedies against violence. In 1989, the then Chairperson of the Commission, Mrs. Milagro Azcuenaga Melendez, had suggested to the Commission on the Status of Women, at Vienna, the idea of a draft inter-American convention on the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women. That Convention guaranteed women the free exercise of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; established the responsibility of States to take adequate action to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women; established the principle that violence against women was a violation of human rights; and defined the various forms of violence - physical, sexual and psychological. It was a unique document that could help to change obsolete behaviour and help women to be better integrated into society and fulfil themselves in conditions of dignity. She invited all the nations of the world to associate themselves with the efforts of the Commission to ensure that that initiative bore fruit.

23. The advancement of women also depended on the achievement of other goals pursued by the United Nations, such as peace, development and environmental balance. Her delegation fully shared the idea that women should participate in discussions on peace. Women were also among the main agents of development, although their contribution was not always visible; moreover, since environmental balance was a prerequisite for sustainable development, the integration of women, from basic areas such as education and employment to the decision-making levels, was essential. For that reason, women needed the support of men, who must be sufficiently enlightened to perceive the benefits of such integration.

24. As for the participation of women in decision-making, there was in Argentina a National Council for Women, established in March 1991, which reported directly to the President of the Republic. President Menem had also established, in January 1993, a committee of women advisers whose mandate was to develop a plan of equal opportunities for women, to be implemented at once, and a three-year plan for the advancement of Argentine women. In addition, the electoral code had been amended and it was now mandatory for at least 30 per cent of the candidates running for national and municipal office to be women. Thanks to that reform, for the first time in the history of the country women had obtained 13 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Representatives in the recent legislative elections held in October 1993.

25. She hoped that the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1995 would see the start of a new cycle of activities which would increase the chances of women being valued, skilled, free and represented in decision-making.

26. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Russian Federation) said that the international community was increasingly aware of the importance of the advancement of women, and for that credit should be given to the United Nations, which had invited Governments

(Mr. Parshikov, Russian Federation)

and non-governmental organizations to consider equal opportunity for men and women as a basic condition for social development. In that regard, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies retained their relevance as a framework for the formulation of national plans. Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that the implementation of those Strategies left much to be desired. The reasons for continuing discrimination against women and the measures to be taken to remedy the situation must be analysed in detail. In that connection, the Russian Federation hoped that the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women would contain new approaches and formulate specific recommendations with a view to the attainment of the effective equality of women. The draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women, recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption by the General Assembly, was also very important for the attainment of true equality between the sexes and the full enjoyment of human rights, and the Russian Federation fully supported its adoption.

27. The relocation from Vienna to New York of the Division for the Advancement of Women was a matter of concern to his delegation. It hoped that it would not prejudice the preparations for the World Conference, among other things.

28. In the view of the Russian Federation, the thirty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women had been of particular interest because of the number and importance of the questions considered. He noted that, for the first time, the Commission had achieved consensus on one of the three resolutions of a political nature which had been before it, namely, the resolution on the situation of women under apartheid. That was a positive sign.

29. In the Russian Federation, an increase had been noted recently in political activity among women, which manifested itself in meetings of women's organizations, such as the Union of Russian Women, and conferences such as the one held in Moscow in June on the topic "Women and freedom: the options available in a world of tradition and change", in which the representatives of 20 countries had participated. Moreover, new bodies dealing with issues involving women, children and the family had been established. Finally, the Russian Federation was among the first countries to have established bodies with specific responsibility for the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, including a National Council comprised of representatives of all sectors of the country's economic and social life. The Council's deliberations had revealed the need for greater participation by women in decision-making. In the Russian Federation, women made up 53 per cent of the population and half of the workforce. Ensuring a greater role for women in decision-making was indeed a matter of justice, but it was also a condition for social development. The abilities of the many highly qualified women in the Russian Federation were not being used to the fullest extent. Development with a human face, marrying economic growth with social justice, necessarily required the full participation of men and women.

30. The problem of promoting women to leadership posts took on special importance on the eve of the elections to be held in Russia on 12 December 1993. Women were fully aware of that fact and had established a political movement

(Mr. Parshikov, Russian Federation)

called "The Women of Russia", which had already gathered a large number of signatures, becoming one of the 12 parties engaged in the electoral campaign. It was highly probable that its slogan "The more women in power in Russia, the more stable the country" would meet with a broad response throughout the country.

31. Mrs. AOKI (Japan) recalled that 100 years earlier, New Zealand had been the first nation to grant women the right to vote. Many countries had since followed that example.

32. In a period marked by major political, social and economic changes, women's concerns must be taken into account in United Nations activities and efforts in that direction must be continued. In Japan, major political changes had also occurred, with the election of a new Parliament and the formation of a coalition Government in which women held important posts.

33. Her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women that the preparations for the Conference should emphasize finding common ground while showing respect for the diversity of situations. At the international level, information activities must be strengthened so that women would be kept well-informed on the preparations. Her Government had allocated $500,000 in its 1993 budget for a contribution to the Trust Fund for preparatory activities for the Conference and had also assisted the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the preparations for the regional preparatory meeting to be held in Jakarta in June 1994. A national preparatory committee had also been established.

34. Her delegation welcomed the increase in the percentage of women in Secretariat posts subject to geographical distribution. The Secretary-General would not be able to reach the goals established in the relevant General Assembly resolutions, however, unless Member States recommended suitably qualified candidates. Japan had therefore taken measures at the national level towards that end. As of June 1993, the proportion of women out of the total number of Japanese staff members in posts subject to geographical distribution had risen to nearly 48 per cent, although the total number of Japanese staff members remained far below the desirable range. Her delegation noted that over the past 12 months there had been a considerable increase in the percentage of women holding posts at the D-1 level and above. In that regard, she welcomed the unanimous re-election of Mrs. Ogata as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

35. It was encouraging that all Member States in the Latin American and Caribbean region were now parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and her delegation urged those countries which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention. Efforts to eradicate discrimination based on sex should be continued, as they would help to put an end to violence against women, which not only constituted a violation of human rights, but also caused severe psychological damage to the children of its victims. The adoption of the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women would be a major step forward.

(Mrs. Aoki, Japan)

36. The proposed merger of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), two institutions which had made great contributions to the increased awareness of women's issues in policy-making, required careful consideration and should be the subject of a consensus decision.

37. In October 1993 her Government had hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. The Tokyo Declaration adopted at its conclusion acknowledged the role played by African women, recommended that special measures be taken to promote their rights and role and emphasized the need to enhance cooperative efforts by local non-governmental organizations. Her delegation would like to see similar efforts in every part of the world during the preparatory process for the World Conference on Women.

38. Mr. BANDHARE (India) said that the adoption by the Commission on the Status of Women of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women had been an important landmark. He stressed in particular the importance of article 3 of the Declaration, which enumerated women's rights, in particular the right to be free from all forms of discrimination. The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/48/38) and the Secretary-General's report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/48/354) were an indication of the interest which Member States attached to the Convention. As of 1 August 1993, 125 States had become parties to the Convention, 91 had ratified it, 32 had acceded to it and 2 had succeeded to it. His delegation urged all States to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. In that context, his delegation was pleased that the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in June 1993, had recognized the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and called for the creation of a post of special rapporteur on violence against women. His delegation strongly recommended that the mandate of that post should be expanded to include other problems faced by women, such as unemployment and illiteracy.

39. The number of women's organizations, especially in rural areas and at the grass-roots level, had continued to grow in India. The Indian Constitution prohibited discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Two constitutional amendments stipulated that one third of all high-ranking posts must be reserved for women in local self-governing bodies. The Bureau of Women's Welfare and Development in the Department of Women and Child Development played an essential role in the awareness of women's concerns in all sectors of the economy. In its eighth plan, his Government stressed the need to ensure that the fruits of development did not bypass women and to devise special complementary programmes which could improve women's status in a country where women accounted for 48.1 per cent of the population. The National Perspective Plan for Women for the period from 1988 to 2000 contained a series of recommendations on the subject.

40. The National Commission for Women, set up under a federal act, reviewed laws relating to safeguards for women and was headed by a woman who also sat as

(Mr. Bandhare, India)

an ex officio member on the National Commission for Human Rights. The Indian Government had launched a national plan of action for the Decade of the Girl Child (1991-2000) sponsored by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Special attention was focused on girl children and adolescents. His Government had also set up a special National Credit Fund for Women to grant loans to the poorest women. The Government had also endeavoured to record the contribution of women in the informal sector in the national census. The Department of Women and Child Development had taken part with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in gender sensitization programmes.

41. Throughout the world, poverty affected women more than men. Rural women in developing countries needed to participate in the decision-making process for sustainable development. The Secretary-General's report on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187) contained many valuable suggestions on the subject. In India's experience, development programmes which had involved the participation of women had been more successful than those which had not.

42. Women and children made up nearly 80 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons. That was a sad reality which could not be avoided, but needed to be addressed effectively. The Fourth World Conference on Women would provide an opportunity for reviewing the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. His delegation thanked the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of those Strategies (A/48/413) and had taken note of the recommendations on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. His delegation also supported the proposal in the report to link major international events of 1995, especially the World Summit for Social Development, to the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

43. Mr. DUONG CHI DUNG (Viet Nam) said that the World Conference on Human Rights had marked a turning-point in the activities conducted by the Organization and the international community for the defence and promotion of the rights of the individual in general and of women in particular. In fact, the Conference had stated that priority should be given to measures guaranteeing women equal rights, stressing that women's fundamental rights were an integral part of the universal rights of the individual and advocating women's equal participation in development efforts. The Conference had also emphasized the protection of women and girl children from violence and other violations of their rights, and had invited all States to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the year 2000.

44. He welcomed the untiring efforts made by the international community over the past 20 years to promote awareness at all levels of society of the need for changes in attitude and thinking and an acceleration of the process of women's emancipation.

45. The Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995 and to which Viet Nam attached great importance, would coincide with the fiftieth anniversary

(Mr. Duong Chi Dung, Viet Nam)

of the United Nations. The Conference would make it possible to evaluate the progress made by the Organization regarding the status of women in general and the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in particular, and to consider the problems and obstacles to the advancement of women, and to adopt a concrete and concise action platform which would translate into realistic, effective and immediate action, thereby creating a global perspective for the twenty-first century, which would take the role of both sexes fully into account.

46. In 1993, cognizant of the importance of the preparations for the World Conference at the national level, his Government had created the Vietnamese National Committee for the Advancement of Women, a mixed body which succeeded the National Committee for the United Nations Decade for Women and consisted of representatives of the Government and non-governmental organizations active in the country.

47. That Committee was in charge of coordinating all activities connected with the advancement of women in general as well as with preparations for the Ministerial Conference of Asia and the Pacific on the participation of women in development and the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Committee would prepare the country's national report, mobilize all groups in society, send missions to different communities for an on-the-spot study of the actual situation of women and make recommendations which would be submitted to the Government. The Committee would also seek to instil a greater sense of the importance of women's emancipation and of the role of the United Nations system in that area.

48. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an important means of promoting women's rights and of encouraging their participation in all aspects of social life. Violence against women was a serious violation of the rights of the individual. His delegation therefore welcomed the fruitful work carried out by the Working Group on Violence against Women and the draft declaration which would certainly be adopted by the General Assembly at the current session.

49. Bearing in mind the principles set forth in the Charter, the United Nations could not help but make the advancement of women one of its main objectives. Through perseverance, it would be possible to overcome difficulties and ensure that the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 was a success.

50. Mr. AL-KINDI (United Arab Emirates) welcomed the actions taken for the advancement of women by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UNITAR, UNIFEM and UNDP. However, despite all those efforts improvement in the situation of women had been slower in the developing than in the developed countries, because, in the former, the resources for implementing specific programmes were lacking and the level of education and training of women was insufficient. Those gaps must be filled in order to integrate women into sustainable development.

(Mr. Al-Kindi, United Arab Emirates)

51. The international community should take effective steps at all levels to identify and eliminate the obstacles to implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

52. The United Arab Emirates attached great importance to the protection of women against violence and discrimination, which were major obstacles to reaching the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women. In that connection, the fate of the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina was tragic and it was a shame to see the international community incapable of taking action to end that situation. He hoped that the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women would be adopted at the current session.

53. Convinced of the important role that women could play in all areas of society, the United Arab Emirates paid considerable attention to women's issues and worked hard for the advancement of women in accordance with the values and principles of Islam and with Arab traditions.

54. Since its creation in 1975, the Union of Women of the United Arab Emirates had done much for women. It had started by concentrating its efforts on the situation of women in isolated rural areas and was currently rendering services throughout the country. The Union had set up numerous literacy and adult education centres to eradicate illiteracy in the country by the year 2000. It also organized meetings and symposiums for preparing women to make their contribution in all areas of society, including senior posts and posts frequently perceived as reserved for men. The Union participated in many international conferences in order to highlight women's achievements in the United Arab Emirates.

55. The United Arab Emirates delegation expected a lot from the important conferences to be held in upcoming years, including the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development. Those conferences would address issues of interest to women and it was to be hoped that they would result in solutions to women's problems. In that connection, in view of the important role that the United Nations played in the advancement of women, it was essential for the Organization to take the steps necessary for facilitating access to high-level Secretariat posts for women from developing countries.

56. Mrs. VANNINI (Nicaragua) said that in Latin America, although women constituted more than half the population and the scope of their participation in the development process was growing, their current socio-economic status did not fairly reflect their role in the economy.

57. In that regard, the Nicaraguan delegation fully shared the position of UNIFEM that unequal terms of trade and the debt burden contributed to worsening the status of the poor sectors of society in developing countries, in particular women and children.

58. Currently, Nicaragua was having simultaneously to build democracy, reconstruct a devastated society and maintain its competitiveness within the

(Mrs. Vannini, Nicaragua)

constraints of an economic adjustment plan which limited considerably its ability to invest in the social sector. Despite those constraints, the country was succeeding in advancing the cause of women. On the occasion of the opening first national forum on the topic "Women and the ownership of property", the President of Nicaragua had expressed her Government's intention to institute proceedings to increase the participation of rural women in the development of agriculture and livestock. Moreover, as the President had emphasized, recognizing the right of rural women to own land was tantamount to promoting equality and ensuring the well-being of future generations. In the future, that initial step should be followed up by granting loans for acquiring capital goods, technological support and by overcoming obstacles, on the understanding that all such progress would depend on the means available to the State for financing social policy.

59. The efforts made by the Nicaraguan Government for the advancement of women - in all respects - would continue to have little effect so long as the economic crisis continued, since, for women, one of the most serious symptoms of that crisis was the high level of unemployment.

60. Nicaragua welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/118 which provided for the granting of special assistance to Nicaragua by United Nations bodies and by the international community in general; however, there continued to be a need for an urgent solution to the problem of the debt which had been incurred, in part, to cover the cost of the war and the repayment thereof was being accomplished to the detriment of peace and of the development of the country. From 1990 to date, Nicaragua had been obliged to pay out to international financial institutions more than it had received from them as investment in the economic and social sectors.

61. For that reason, women of the developed world who had power to make decisions in their respective countries should exert pressure for greater fair trade and for lightening the debt burden, since it was impossible to isolate the problem of the status of women from its general economic context.

62. It was appropriate, on the eve of a new World Conference on Women, to take account of the impact of those various factors so that the theme chosen for the Conference "The struggle for equality, development and peace" could become a reality. The fact of the matter was that there could be no equality without justice or development without equity or peace without sustainable development.

63. Mr. MARKER (Pakistan) welcomed the holding of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Conference would provide a timely opportunity to evaluate progress achieved to date and would impart new momentum to global action for the advancement of women. The success of the Conference and its impact on the global agenda would depend greatly on the quality of the preparatory process, which would entail coordinated action at all levels. The United Nations Secretariat would have a pivotal role to play in that regard and Pakistan welcomed the steps taken by the Secretary-General in preparation for the Conference. Preparations at the national level were equally important, such as the establishment of committees or focal points that would organize or

(Mr. Marker, Pakistan)

coordinate national activities and raise public awareness of the Conference. Pakistan also looked forward to the decision to convene early a inter-sessional working group to draft, as suggested by the Commission on the Status of Women, a concise platform of action. He also shared the view that non-governmental organizations should be closely associated in the preparatory process for the Conference.

64. Although the World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna had reaffirmed that the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels were priority objectives of the international community, as well as the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, little real progress had been achieved in those areas either in the industrialized or in the developing countries. The lack of progress could be attributed to, inter alia, underdevelopment, population problems and structural adjustment programmes from which women and children suffered most. Concerted action was needed to increase the involvement of women in economic decision-making; to guarantee equal employment opportunities for women; to develop services to assist women in child-care responsibilities; and to establish training programmes for women living in extreme poverty.

65. The advancement of women was a necessary condition for sustainable development, as Agenda 21 recognized. There was a growing awareness that poverty affected more women than men since women, particularly in rural areas, were disadvantaged owing to their twofold need to earn a living and to care for their families. The concerns of rural women should be considered and integrated into all development activities.

66. Despite the advances of civilization and the international standards accepted by States, women continued to be victims of violence in times of conflict. Pakistan, along with the entire international community, particularly condemned the systematic rape of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of whom were Muslims, which was part of the campaign of ethnic cleansing being carried out in that country. His delegation earnestly hoped that the international tribunal established pursuant to Security Council resolution 808 (1993) would soon try the perpetrators of those shameful crimes. Similarly, in the Indian-occupied State of Jammu and Kashmir, thousands of Muslim women had been victims of rape, as documented in a recent publication of Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights.

67. The strategies for the advancement of women would not succeed until they were accompanied by improved national machinery for the integration of women in the development process, which should be a priority objective of the developing countries. In Pakistan, the recent election of Mrs. Benazir Bhutto as head of the Government had invigorated efforts, coordinated by the Ministry of Women in Development with the support of non-governmental organizations, to recognize the women's rights which were guaranteed by the country's Constitution, in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The new Government had drafted two bills aimed at reserving a specific number of seats in the National Assembly for women and increasing their representation in each of the four provincial

(Mr. Marker, Pakistan)

assemblies. The Ministry of Women in Development had initiated a large number of development projects to benefit women, representing a total investment of nearly 1.5 billion rupees. A special public bank had been established to facilitate the granting of loans to women, particularly in rural areas. The Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women continued to promote women's rights in education, health and employment and to secure the integration of minority women in the life of the country. His Government had also provided support to a number of non-governmental organizations which, it believed, played a key role in the advancement of women, by establishing craft promotion centres, dispensaries, legal-aid services, garment production centres and training courses.

68. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that women in Tunisia, an Islamic country, had always enjoyed a status that recognized their right to flourish in the same way as men and which had been clearly defined in the legal and social spheres, even before the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been adopted. At present, despite certain set-backs, measures to improve the status of Tunisian women continued to be adopted. He mentioned, inter alia, recent provisions governing child care, divorce, quelling domestic violence, and the right to a life, independent of the code of propriety, including the case of adultery. In other areas such as nationality, work, education and family planning, new measures had been adopted to eliminate discrimination against women.

69. Nevertheless, there was always a gap between rights conferred and rights enjoyed, especially in rural areas plagued with poverty, a phenomenon common to all developing countries. Thus, the advancement of women in the countryside, a prerequisite to development in rural areas and in the country in general, was a priority of his Government's economic policies. Many projects meant for women had been launched under an integrated rural development programme and a credit programme had been devised to encourage women to participate more in production. Finally, his Government continued to combat illiteracy and had set itself the goal of reducing the rate of illiteracy among women from 30 per cent in 1991 to 17 per cent in 1996.

70. At the international level, his delegation regretted that the three priority objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies: equality, development and peace had not been fully achieved owing to political and social instability, poverty, environmental degradation, the debt burden and structural adjustment programmes which women were the first to suffer. He emphasized the fact that the advancement of women required a favourable economic atmosphere and genuine commitment of the international community to enforce the respect of human rights and especially women's rights. Consequently, his delegation strongly supported the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which called for greater action on behalf of women.

71. The Fourth World Conference on Women would provide an opportunity to evaluate the progress accomplished since 1985, to determine obstacles to the advancement of women and to devise new strategies which emphasized international cooperation and joint activities. The Conference should also serve as a

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

catalyser and stimulate renewed political commitment for the advancement of women.

72. Ms. FERTEKLIGIL (Turkey) said that, despite the rapid evolution of the world's social, economic and political situation, women's integration and full participation in development continued to encounter numerous obstacles, such as inequality in access to employment, education and professional training, unequal pay and insufficient legislation that protected women's rights. Thus, even in the developed countries, women were denied access to high-level jobs and could not participate in the decision-making process on equal terms. Full participation of women in the public and political life of the country required sustained efforts on the legal front and on a practical level. In that regard, information played a major role in teaching women about their rights and motivating them to demand those rights, and in raising public awareness about women's issues at the national and international levels.

73. The Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995 would therefore constitute a very important forum and her country intended to play an active role in its preparation. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Division for the Advancement of Women and hoped that its role of its coordinator of international cooperation would be strengthened as a result of its being transferred to New York. Her delegation also appreciated the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to mobilize public opinion on the issue of gender equality in development activities. Referring to the note by the Secretary-General on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/48/301), she welcomed INSTRAW's programmes and expressed interest at the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted by the Institute in its studies. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General regarding the merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM (A/48/591), she said that she understood the reasons which had led the Secretary-General to devise such an initiative and believed all aspects of that question should be reviewed.

74. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was one of the most important legal instruments, particularly at a time when women still suffered discrimination of every kind, the most reprehensible being physical violence, which was incompatible with human dignity. The most terrible form of such violence was currently to be seen in Europe, with the systematic practice of rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the "ethnic cleansing" being directed against the Bosnian people. It was an unforgivable crime against humanity which ought to be severely punished by the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991. Turkey was ready to participate fully in any initiative to provide psychological and social assistance to women in Bosnia and Herzegovina who had been victims of rape. In the same spirit it supported the draft declaration on violence against women, which it hoped would be adopted by the General Assembly. Her country also favoured the appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a special rapporteur on violence against women. It further supported the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the number of

(Ms. Fertekligil, Turkey)

women holding positions of responsibility at the United Nations Secretariat, since it believed that with its moral weight the United Nations could do much for the advancement of women.

75. The contribution made by women in Turkey grew from year to year. Development planning had made extensive provision for improving the situation of both rural and urban women. A Ministry of State to oversee the situation of women had been set up in 1992. Moreover, more and more non-governmental organizations were taking action to back up the initiatives of the public sector. Turkey was also proud to be among the few countries to be headed by a woman, thus achieving full equality between men and women in the enjoyment of political rights. Aware of the work which remained to be done to ensure the complete integration of legal provisions with current social, economic and cultural structures, it intended to spare no effort in continuing to improve the situation of its women.

76. Ms. MBIMBI (Angola) said that in Africa women, the majority of whom were engaged in the agricultural sector and who were the main contributors to food production, were none the less mostly not taken into consideration under national development plans. In that connection, her delegation believed that the plight of rural women should be seriously addressed during the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Certainly there was much to be done. For that reason there must be renewed effort to work for the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

77. Where peace was concerned, her delegation was convinced that women could play a significant role, provided that they could participate on an equal basis in political life and decision-making. Women's diverse experiences in many areas of life made them more disposed to seek the negotiated settlement of issues rather than to choose confrontation. In Angola, where there were 2 million displaced persons, 55 per cent of them women, they were still engaged in working for a better future for their children and the nation as a whole. They were supported in such efforts by UNICEF, which had recently launched a campaign to help Angolan children who were victims of the war. For their part, the Secretariat of State for the Promotion and Development of Women and the Office of the Angolan First Lady had organized a seminar entitled "Common causes and the future of Angola"; it had aimed at mobilizing society to ensure the survival and protection of Angolan children and to remind the international community that the salvation of Angola depended not only on the country itself, but also on international solidarity.

78. Angola welcomed the preparations for the World Conference and approved of the idea of full participation by non-governmental organizations, even those with no consultative status. Angola had established a National Preparatory Committee for the World Conference, under the supervision of the Secretary of State for the Promotion and Development of Women. The advancement of women could not, however, be separated from the wider international environment, particularly the international economic order. In that regard, her delegation considered that the sustained and sustainable development of the developing

(Ms. Mbimbi, Angola)

countries and their full integration into the world economy were indispensable to the advancement of women.

79. Ms. KIBACHA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that she saw the appointment of Mrs. Gertrude Mongella to the post of Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women as a tribute to her unwavering commitment to the cause of women. She recalled that Mrs. Mongella had led the Tanzanian delegation to the Conference in Nairobi, having been appointed Minister responsible for women's affairs in 1985, and had initiated a programme to integrate women's issues into the country's political and administrative structures. She asked Member States to give Mrs. Mongella their full support. She also thanked the Government of China for its generous offer to host the Conference in 1995.

80. Her delegation noted with satisfaction the achievements made in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Experience showed that women were more aware of their rights, including their democratic right to participate in activities for development. They were none the less still relegated to their lowly position in societies which retained inequality between the sexes in all aspects of life. The Platform for Action to be considered by the Conference should indicate appropriate measures for instilling more self-confidence in women.

81. The rivalry and conflicts that had followed the cold war, together with the slow process of democratization, which could have enhanced equality and development, created an extremely frustrating situation for women. They were, however, optimistic that the opportunities for reinvesting the available resources in human development still existed, by widening women's access to education and training at all levels and providing health and credit facilities. It was important that women in the developing world, in particular, were made party to the transfer and development of technology, since only technology could relieve them of the drudgery which imposed a heavy workload and impeded their progress.

82. Any investment in women and development had a trickle-down effect on their children and the whole family. Tanzanian women were well aware of that, since they had been the main beneficiaries of the literacy campaign and the expanded universal elementary education programme, carried out with the help of the international community in the 1970s and the 1980s. Many of the ills from which societies suffered could be, if not eradicated, at least reduced, if policies could be designed to strengthen both the economic and the social base, since the two complemented each other. Her delegation therefore hoped that the Platform for Action would give priority to human resources development and indicators, whereby women's contribution to society and development could be assessed.

83. Tanzania, a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, gave unlimited support to the Vienna Declaration, which was yet another landmark at the international level on the way to the elimination of such discrimination. The major challenge facing Member States was to ensure that women enjoyed the rights enshrined in those instruments.

(Ms. Kibacha, United Republic of Tanzania)

84. In Tanzania, despite the fact that certain traditions still set up barriers to equality among the sexes, steps had been taken to improve the status of women. On the political plane, legislation ensured that not less than 25 per cent of those elected to leadership posts at every level of local government were women. In the Parliament, at least 15 per cent of the members must be women. In addition, for planning purposes, the Government was in the process of collecting statistics on the educational level of men and women and their respective standing in political and managerial leadership posts, and its educational policies were geared to minimizing the inequalities. By the 1980s, equal enrolment had been achieved at the elementary level, and girls had come to represent an average of 42 per cent at the secondary level. Nevertheless, the adverse effects of structural adjustment policies had slowed down the Government's determination to improve the status of women, and had also revived cultural barriers against the education of women.

85. Her delegation attached great importance to the issue of violence against women. Apart from affecting the dignity of women, it disrupted family life, bred poverty and made children homeless, exposing them even to drug abuse and trafficking. The question of violence should therefore be given a permanent place in the discussions of the World Summit for Social Development and in the activities of the International Year of the Family. It should also be part of the Platform of Action for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which should include specific measures on the question. The way to a peaceful world would be through the establishment of good and friendly relations among men and women. Tanzania therefore urged Member States to support the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

86. Lastly, Tanzania intended to participate fully in the preparations for the 1995 World Conference. It had already instituted a national steering committee to coordinate preparations and ensure that women made good use of that opportunity to make their voices and demands heard nationally.

AGENDA ITEM 113: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.23

87. Mr. ALIYEV (Azerbaijan) said that the draft resolution on emergency international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan had been prompted by the tragic fate of refugees and displaced persons numbering close to 1,150,000. In recent months the situation had deteriorated still further, when about 50,000 persons, most of them women, old people and children, had been forced out of their homes and found themselves without shelter as winter approached. His Government was doing all that it could to help those unfortunate people but it lacked the means to deal with the dire need. His delegation recognized that currently the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world requiring assistance was enormous. It believed, however, that the situation in Azerbaijan was exceptionally serious on a humanitarian

(Mr. Aliyev, Azerbaijan)

level and therefore deserved the urgent attention of the international community. The life and death of hundreds of millions were at stake.

88. With regard to the amendments the Armenian delegation intended to propose to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.23, the aim of which was to give the resolution a regional character, the cause of the current situation in Azerbaijan must be borne in mind, and plain talk was called for. The problem of refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan was a result of the aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan; it was the result of the occupation of one quarter of the territory of Azerbaijan and of a policy of ethnic cleansing. By introducing its amendments, Armenia sought to escape its responsibility in that situation and to camouflage its role in that aggression. That was why his delegation was totally opposed to the Armenian amendments. Not that it objected to having Armenia receive humanitarian assistance; but it refused to see the aggressor and the victim named in one and the same draft resolution. In that connection it should be recalled that the Security Council had recognized the tensions existing between Azerbaijan and Armenia in several resolutions, the last of them dated 12 November 1993.

89. He asked delegations to make an exception to the unwritten rule that the Committee should adopt regional resolutions in matters involving humanitarian assistance, bearing in mind that, in the specific case of Azerbaijan, that country's name could not appear side by side with other countries in the region in the same draft resolution. Before concluding, he pointed out that in the first preambular paragraph, after the word "Recalling", the phrase "the relevant paragraphs of" should be added; and that, after the phrase "14 October 1993", the phrase "and 884 (1993) of 12 November 1993" should be added.

90. His delegation informed the Committee that Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone and Yemen had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

Proposed amendments to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.23 (A/C.3/48/L.29)

91. Ms. DOUDOYAN (Armenia) said that it was unfortunate that Azerbaijan sought to use a humanitarian issue - assistance to refugees and displaced persons - for political ends. Her delegation itself did not want to enter into a polemic with Azerbaijan. It had sought to draft a text that would satisfy the Azerbaijani delegation, even going so far as to propose the inclusion of paragraphs in the draft resolution specifically mentioning the countries concerned. Regrettably, that arrangement had been rejected by Azerbaijan.

92. She recalled that when her delegation had spoken under agenda item 113, it had favoured having all countries faced with the problem of refugees receive assistance from the international community. However, her delegation had several reservations regarding the text proposed by Azerbaijan. First, it believed that the word "emergency" should not appear in the title of the draft resolution. Draft resolutions concerning emergency assistance to given countries were generally submitted to the Second Committee after having been introduced in the plenary Assembly. Her delegation therefore suggested that the

(Ms. Doudoyan, Armenia)

title of the draft resolution should be reworded to read, "International assistance to refugees and displaced persons in the trans-Caucasian region - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia". The addition of two countries, namely, Armenia and Georgia, reflected her delegation's concern for impartiality and its refusal to have a political approach taken to a humanitarian issue. Putting the problem of refugees in a regional context satisfied the imperatives of impartiality and non-politicization. Consequently, in document A/C.3/48/L.29, the first preambular paragraph had been couched in general terms: "Recalling its relevant resolutions regarding humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons". Consequently, too, the word "Azerbaijan" had, throughout the preambular part, been replaced by the word "region".

93. She hoped that the Committee would be sensitive to the concerns that had prompted her delegation to submit those amendments to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.23.

AGENDA ITEM 108: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued)

(a) RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.12 and L.19)

94. Mr. ATABEKOV (Kyrgyzstan), referring to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.12 on the use of mercenaries as a means to violate human rights and to impede the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, and to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.19 on the importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples of self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights, said that he would have abstained had he been present at the time of the vote on the two draft resolutions, and would like the abstention recorded.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.